



## Adolescent to parent violence project

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## Mapping the problem of APV

Centre for Criminology - University of Oxford

### Introduction

Adolescent to parent violence poses significant challenges to parents as it inverts traditional familial relationships of power and control. In addition to living in fear of assault, parents who are abused by their children report feelings of shame and blame and are reluctant to report the problem out of a fear of the consequences for their child. APV is a problem which remains largely unarticulated within youth justice policy literature and academic discourse in England and Wales. Current responses are inadequate

and there is a lack of appropriate support for parent victims.

This project aims to raise awareness of the issue, and develop recommendations for effective policy to help families experiencing APV.

*The research findings presented in this briefing draw upon an ESRC-funded research project which represents the first large-scale study of adolescent to parent violence in the UK. They are based on the analysis of victim, offender and incident characteristics of 1892 cases reported to the Metropolitan Police in 2009–2010.*

### Our definition of APV:

*“Physical violence, threats of violence and criminal damage towards parents/carers by their adolescent children (aged 13-19 years)”.*

### Aims of the APV Project

- To investigate **how violence is experienced** and negotiated by parents and adolescents.
- To explore **how APV cases** are currently processed and **managed** within the **criminal justice system**.
- To develop **practical policy recommendations** for families experiencing APV, police, youth justice, and others who work with these families.

### The People



Dr Rachel Condry  
(Principal Investigator)



Dr Caroline Miles  
(Research Officer)

### Legal issues and practical implications

- **Lack of official recognition of the problem** of adolescent to parent offending. A widely held belief that parents are able to assert power and control over their children. **Not officially defined as domestic violence** if the adolescent was under the age of 18 at the time of offending until 2013, and of 16 from now on. **Children of a younger age still lack an official definition.**
- **Consequent lack of national figures** for adolescent to parent violence **on cases reported to the police and on the frequency** with which it **appears in youth justice and other services.**
- Consequent **lack of specialist knowledge** to support the problem and **lack of guidance and policy** for practitioners.

### For further information please see:

Condry R. and Miles C. (2013), 'Adolescent to parent violence: Framing and mapping a hidden problem', *Criminology and Criminal Justice*, 0(0) 1–19, DOI: 10.1177/1748895813500155.



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## Key Findings

Of the 1,892 cases of adolescent to parent violence reported in London in one year (2009-10):

- 77% of all parent victims were female
- 87% of all perpetrators were male
- 66% of cases involved son to mother

## Who are the perpetrators?

- Numerous cases involved offenders with a pattern of repeated aggressive behavior.
- Most (though not all) were males with a mean age of 16.4 and mostly classified as White European, although many were classified as Afro-

Caribbean.

## Who are the victims?

- Mostly (though not all) females with a mean age of 43.6 and a victim ethnicity similar to that of suspects.
- 47% of all victims were unemployed, 12% were housewives and 6% were nurses or teachers.

## What are the characteristics of the incidents?

- 56% involved common assault or assault with injury.
- 23% involved criminal damage to a dwelling.
- 86% of those reported against mothers

were perpetrated by their sons and only 14% by their daughters.

- 92% of those reported against fathers were perpetrated by their sons and only 8% by their daughters.
- 70% recorded “no injury” or “threat of injury”. However, “no injury” was sometimes recorded despite the victim was punched, kicked or strangled.
- Records showed similar offences for female and male offenders.
- Fathers were more likely to report their children for violence against the person whereas mothers were more likely to do so for criminal damage.

## What do these findings tell us?

- APV is a largely gendered phenomenon with sons accounting for the majority of perpetrators and mothers for most victims.
- There is however, a significant proportion of fathers reporting APV, generally for more serious offences than mothers.

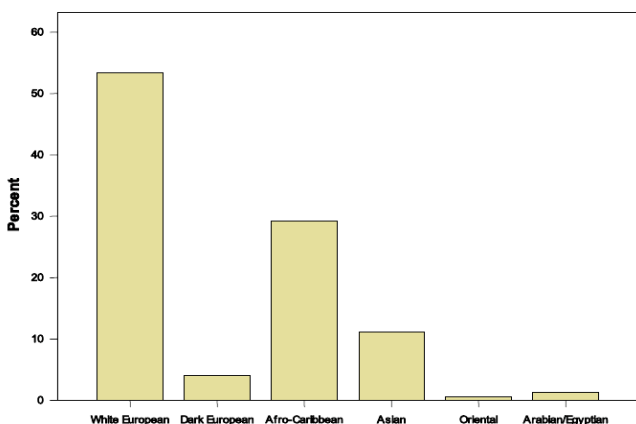


Figure 1. Suspect ethnicity (N = 1830)

- Afro-Caribbean families are over-represented in reporting APV, perhaps due to a greater perception of the police as community care-takers or to an over-representation of Black males in the CJS.
- Almost half of victims were unemployed indicating that families reporting APV are likely to have lower socio-economic backgrounds.
- Mothers were more likely to report their child for lower-levels of violence than fathers, perhaps reflecting mothers feeling more vulnerable, and fathers being reluctant to report due to feelings of shame for not being able to establish discipline within the family.

**APV is a very real problem and needs a thorough research base and guidance and policy for police, youth justice, health and education services and other services working with families.**

## Contacts

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